(b) whether the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) has given its approval for the said project; and

(c) if so, in what manner various companies and corporations are proposed to participate in this venture?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI *T.* R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The information is being collected and will be placed on the Table of the House.

Divers engaged by ONGC for off-shore Operation

634. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of divers engaged by the ONGC for off-shore operations;

(b) the nature of duties that those divers perform;

(c) whether many foreign divers have been hired recently by the ONGC at much higher wages, than those being paid to the Indian divers; and

(d) if so, the reasons for hiring foreign divers and paying higher wages?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) ONGC Ltd. has not directly engaged any divers for its off-shore operations. The Corporation engages the services of reputed and experienced Diving Agencies on contract, strictly based on need.

(b) to (d) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

कच्चे तेल पर लगाया जाने वाला उपकर

635.**श्री राम जेठमलानी**: क्या प्रधान मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंकि:

(क) क्या सरकार का ध्यान 4 जनवरी,1997 के "दि फाइनेंशियल एक्सप्रेस" में "मिनिस्ट्री आस्क फार मोर फण्ड्स फ्रोम आबल सेस एकाउंट" शीर्षक से प्रकाशित समाचार की ओर दिलाया गया हैं;

(ख) यदि हां,तो क्या यह सच है कि सरकार द्वारा कच्चे तेल के उत्पादन पर उपकर के माध्यम से प्रति टन 900 रू.के हिसाब से वसूली की जाती है; और

(ग) यदि नहीं,तो तत्संबंधी तथ्य क्या हैं ?

पेट्रोलियम और प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री(श्री टी.आर.बालु): (क) दिनांक 4 जनवरी,1997 के फाइर्नेशियल एक्सप्रेस के दिल्ली संस्करण में ऐसा कोई समाचार प्रकाशित नहीं हुआ हैं।

(ख) यह सत्य है कि 900/- रू.प्रति टन की दर से उपकर वसूल किया जाता है।

(ग) प्रश्न नहीं उठता।

Private LPG Distributors in Punjab, Haryana and H.P.

636. SHRI MOHINDAR SINGH KALYAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of LPG distributors of private sector oil companies functioning in Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh as on the 31st January, 1997;

(b) the total number of consumers rcgisterd with these companies;

(c) the number of registrants in the waiting list; and

(d) by when all the registrants in these States are likely to get LPG connections?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (T. R. BAALU): (a) to (d) During February 1993, Government had permitted, under the parallel marketing scheme, private entrepreneurs to import and market LPG, using&etting up their own infrastructure and distribution network, at market determined prices, under their own terms. Private parties are not required to obtain any licence from the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas for undertaking activities under the scheme. They are, however, required to